

PINE STREET BARGE CANAL



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PINE STREET COORDINATING COUNCIL TO REVIEW SUPERFUND PROCESS

BURLINGTON, VT -- Scientists from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will participate in the Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council meetings at the Burlington Electric Department on Dec. 1 and 2 to give presentations on how risks to human health and the ecology affect decision-making at Superfund sites such as the Pine Street Barge Canal in Burlington, Vermont.

The EPA's risk assessments evaluate and quantify the risks to public health and the environment posed by specific chemicals at each site and comprise the foundation for all Superfund cleanups.

"It's really important to learn how and why risk assessments are done so we can truly understand their effect on our Barge Canal," said Marty Feldman, a local citizen representative on the Coordinating Council.

On Dec. 1, Margery Adams, EPA Assistant Regional Counsel, will provide an overview of the Superfund process and Anne Marie Burke, an EPA toxicologist, will talk about how to assess human health risks. On Dec. 2, Susan Svirskey, an EPA Ecological Risk Assessor, will give a presentation on how EPA assesses risks to the environment. Both Burke and Svirskey have had several risk assessment articles published in medical and scientific journals. The meetings will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the presentations will be followed by question and answer periods that will continue until 9 p.m.

The Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council represents a first-of-its-kind effort that includes a diverse cross-section of local citizens, environmental groups, the potentially responsible parties, and state and federal representatives working together to reach consensus on issues of concern at the site. Since its formation, the Council has met regularly to discuss a wide variety of issues pertinent to the site.

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August 15, 1994

NEW ROUND OF STUDIES TO BEGIN AT PINE STREET BARGE CANAL

Burlington, Vt. -- Field teams will embark on a new round of studies next week that are designed to help answer remaining questions concerning the Pine Street Superfund Site in Burlington, Vt.

Contractors for Green Mountain Power Corporation, New England Electric Service, and Vermont Gas will be moving a trailer and various testing equipment on the site in preparation for studies which will build upon the data the Environmental Protection Agency collected during its original assessment of the site from 1989 through 1992. This year's studies constitute the first phase of action the council has decided on to fill data gaps at the site. A second phase will begin next year unless the Coordinating Council finds the first phase provided sufficient data to decide on a remedy.

Most of the site's contamination comes from coal tars and other by-products generated by a coal gasification plant that operated on the premises from the turn of the century through the '60s. Pine Street Coordinating Council members and their scientific experts have been meeting several times a month for the past year to determine what additional studies need to be conducted before deciding on a new cleanup plan. This council represents a first-in-the-nation effort to use a coalition of community, government and business members to reach consensus on contentious issues at the site.

More than 300 additional soil and sediment samples will be collected to further define the concentrations and locations of the contaminated sections of the site.

The scientists will gather information in an effort to determine whether the potential exists for the contaminants to move off the site into Lake Champlain. To measure this possible movement, groundwater at location between the canal and the lake analyzed.

An issue raised during last year's public comment period on the EPA's proposed plan entailed the air emissions emanating from the site under existing conditions. Field teams will install air monitors at various locations on the site to determine if such emissions are occurring under existing conditions, and if they present any type of a public health threat.

"As a council, we decided that it was very important that we start work on as many of the field studies as we possibly could before the snow flies," said Lori Fisher of the Lake Champlain Committee. "We hope to use the data we obtain to answer remaining questions as to whether the site presents a significant risk to human health or the environment."

The Pine Street Coordinating Council was formed in the summer of 1993 after local officials and residents overwhelmingly rejected the EPA's proposed plan to remediate the site.

Note to the media: The Pine Street Coordinating Council will be conducting media tours of the site and the equipment for members of the media at 2:00 on Wednesday, August 17.

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**Council Proposes Cleanup Plan,
Additional Projects for Pine Street Barge Canal Site**

BURLINGTON, Vt. -- The Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council announced today the proposed barge canal cleanup plan, along with a series of additional projects designed to improve the environment in the greater Burlington area.

The EPA will accept public comments on the proposed plan from June 5 through July 8. A public meeting to discuss the proposed plan only will be held at 7 p.m., June 4 at Contois Auditorium in Burlington City Hall, and a formal public hearing will be held June 24 in the same location. A copy of the plan will be available for review at the Burlington Public Library beginning June 4.

The additional projects -- valued at \$3 million -- were agreed upon by the community and the potentially responsible parties, or PRPs. The PRPs agreed to the projects in discussions with the council separate from the federal Superfund process. The additional projects are not subject to public comment.

"This process -- the first-of-its-kind nationwide -- has trimmed the original proposed cleanup plan of \$50 million down to \$10 million. And with the additional special projects we're getting more environmental protection at less cost. That's smart," said John P. DeVillars, administrator for the EPA New England office. "Bravo to the coordinating council for the members' perseverance, creativity and dedication in arriving at a fundamentally sound, economically sensible cleanup decision that will reap benefits far beyond the site itself. The council's groundbreaking work will serve as a blueprint for other communities who are struggling with Superfund cleanup decisions."

Quote from coordinating council

"This has been a long, tedious journey but we have arrived safely and I think the people of Vermont and of the nation should be proud of the work done by the EPA and the other groups and individuals who have worked on this process," said A. Norman Terreri, retired Chief Operating Officer for Green Mountain Power. "We have applied the right science, the right law, and the right financial analysis to this problem. We have also applied common sense, and I believe that this is the glue that held this agreement together. It was possible because, if I can paraphrase Vermont's most famous literary lion, 'we took the road less traveled by.'"

"In 1993, when I called EPA officials in to explain why their proposed remedy was unacceptable to Vermonters and Burlingtonians, they offered to work with us," said Sen. Patrick J. Leahy. "The result is a plan for the Barge Canal and additional environmental projects benefitting Lake Champlain that we can all support. Our thanks to the agency and the coordinating council members for their long years of work that have made this possible."

"The recent settlement reflects the ingenuity and dedication of Burlington residents to developing a comprehensive, affordable and realistic plan," said Sen. James Jeffords. "Their efforts will stand as a model to the nation and a lesson to Congress as we work to fix the Superfund program."

Cong. Sanders

"The proposed remedy for Pine Street represents an immense effort on the part of the coordinating council to reach consensus among a diverse group of interests," said Natural Resources Secretary Barbara G. Ripley. "I can't say enough about the dedication of this group, especially the citizen volunteers. In the best tradition of Vermonters working together, their perseverance forged a pragmatic proposal that protects our environment."

Mayor Clavelle

For the official site proposed plan, the coordinating council recommended and the EPA is proposing the following remedy:

- * Placement of a sand/silt cap on the contaminated canal and wetland sediments to isolate contamination. The cap would be placed under-water causing minimal disturbance to the sediments. Underwater capping has been successfully used at other Superfund sites.
- * Monitoring to ensure that contaminated groundwater does not reach Lake Champlain, monitoring surface water, and monitoring sediment migration to ensure the cap's effectiveness.
- * Place legal controls on land use to prevent use of groundwater for drinking, prevent exposure to soil greater than five feet deep, prevent activities that may result in migration of subsurface contamination, prevent residential use and prevent future use as a children's day care center
- * Five-year reviews to make sure the remedy is effective.

The total estimated cost of the remedy is between \$4.3 - 6 million. After considering the comments received during the public comment period, the EPA will issue a formal decision on the remedy for the Barge Canal Site.

The council also agreed to re-delineate the site boundaries to help facilitate redevelopment near the site. The city of Burlington recently received its second \$200,000 "brownfields" grant from the EPA to redevelop abandoned, contaminated properties. Some of the property the city is considering for reuse abuts the Barge Canal Site.

If the council's site remedy ultimately is adopted, the potentially responsible parties represented on the council will contribute to the following independent additional projects:

1. Restoration of Englesby Brook

Erosion control measures, stormwater treatment devices, and source reduction measures would be put in place to reduce discharges of bacteria, sediment, and other pollutants to Englesby Brook and Lake Champlain, thereby improving water quality.

2. Assessment of Water Quality of Burlington Bay

Funding would be used to determine the current status of the bay and to track changes related to pollution prevention programs like the Englesby Brook restoration. The information developed during the assessment would be made available to citizens and policy makers through a series of outreach efforts.

3. Barge Canal Interpretive Trails

This project would provide safe access to certain portions of the site through a series of connected boardwalks and trails. The trails would include interpretive signs to educate visitors on the natural and cultural history of the area.

4. Economic Redevelopment

The project would fund a site-wide engineering study in order to encourage redevelopment and reuse of the Barge Canal site in a manner protective of the remedy.

The total estimated costs for implementing these additional projects is approximately \$3 million to be spent over a five-year period. The potentially responsible parties have tentatively agreed to fund the projects in addition to paying for and implementing the cleanup remedy at the Pine Street Barge Canal Site.

The 70-acre Pine Street Canal Site was used as a coal gasification plant from 1895 - 1966. Plant waste waters, coal tars, residual oil and wood chips saturated with organic compounds were discharged or disposed of in the Pine Street Canal wetland. The EPA added the site to its National Priorities List of Superfund sites in 1983.

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EPA DROPS BARGE CANAL CLEANUP PLAN IN RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

BOSTON -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

announced today that in response to public comments it has decided not to pursue its current proposal to dredge and contain contaminated soil at the Pine Street Canal Superfund site, as presented in the November, 1992 Proposed Plan.

Paul G. Keough, Acting Regional Administrator stated, "A good Superfund remedy must balance a number of sometimes competing factors -- protecting public health, and the environment, ensuring technical feasibility, and minimizing cost. For the Barge Canal site, public involvement is essential to reaching the right balance. It's clear from the comments that we have not reached that balance, and should not go ahead with our proposed plan."

"We are carefully considering all comments and are currently working with the Lake Champlain Committee to identify the best way to involve Burlington citizens and the local scientific community," Keough said. The Lake Champlain Committee, EPA's Technical Assistance Grant recipient, and other community groups have suggested possible ways to better involve Burlington and local scientists. After reviewing the comments EPA and the LCC will be able to determine the best way to insure effective community input.

In response to requests from the public, EPA extended its comment period on its Proposed Plan to 6 months, the longest ever in the Region. Initial review of the extensive comments shows no support for the plan. Commentors raised concerns regarding EPA's

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human and ecological risk assessment and the need for action. Other options were offered ranging from different cleanup proposals to further studies. A thorough review and evaluation of nearly 100 comments received by EPA will take several months.

Public and state acceptance of cleanup proposals are two of the nine criteria EPA uses to make final decisions about cleanup technologies for sites such as Pine Street.

The Pine Street Canal Superfund site is on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain in the City of Burlington, Vermont. The 50-acre site was historically industrial; however, residences, small shops, offices and public parks are located nearby. A coal gasification plant, generating coals tars and other by-products, operated on the site from the turn of the century until the late 1960s. In 1981, the site was proposed to EPA's National Priorities List (NPL) of hazardous waste sites making it eligible for action under the federal Superfund program. In 1983, the site was officially added to the NPL. In 1985, EPA removed approximately 1500 tons of coal tar, contaminated soil, and sediment from the Maltex Pond part of the site. In 1986, EPA assumed lead responsibility for investigation from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. In 1988, EPA began a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) to determine the nature and extent of contamination and evaluate the range of cleanup alternatives. Widespread contamination was found in the canal and wetlands. In November 1992, EPA proposed a cleanup plan to dredge and contain contamination. The site is connected to Lake Champlain which serves as a source of drinking water for Burlington and other lakeside communities.

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